

Transition and the Future

Parenting a child with a disability: Here's a word ... and a concept...you need to know: Transition!

What's Transition?

We often associate transition with high school students, but transition really just means moving from one life stage to another. Transition includes moving from/to:

- Birth to Three
- Early Childhood/Preschool
- Elementary School
- Middle school
- High school
- Adult life in the community, after public school
- Retirement

The Future!

Again, the purpose of [IDEA](#) is to prepare students for further education, employment, or independent living. Every year your child is receiving special education services you should be preparing them for graduation. As early as possible (we recommend Middle School at the latest), begin talking to your child about his or her plans for the future.

Do you struggle just to get through the day? Figure you'll have time to worry about your child's future later? We've all been there. But you should know this: **The future is coming** and it's coming faster than you can imagine. And, everything you do now may affect your child's future. Do you know everything you need to know?

What do you envision for your child's future?

Where will he live?

Will she work? If so, what career or occupational path do you and she envision?

Where will he spend his free time?

What about friendships, a love relationship?

What will the adult world look like for your child?

- Does my child want to attend a four-year college or university?
- Does my child plan to attend a trade school?
- Does my child plan to enroll in a certificate program at the community college?
- Does my child plan to work in the community? If so, what kind of job would he or she like to do?
- Does my child plan to attend a day program that will require specific self-help skills?
- Does my child plan to live independently or will he or she require supports?

Most importantly, what are your child's hopes and dreams for the future? Do you know?

What Do Parents Need to Know?

No sooner do we get our kids settled in – to Kindergarten, middle school, high school - and before we can take a breath, here comes the next transition! What's a parent to do? Regardless of the change you are facing, here are some steps you can take to make the transition as smooth as possible:

Educate yourself about where you and your child are headed.

What options are available?

For example: Is Head Start an option in place of PPCD? What about Pre-K? Do Kindergartners attend a full-day or half-day program? What elective class choices are offered for junior high/high school? What post-secondary options are available in your community, the state, or nation?

What does a typical day in that environment look like?

For example: Does the campus use single teacher classrooms or do they team/co-teach? Do the students move to other classrooms during the day or do they stay in one classroom the full day? When/where is lunch? What about opportunities for physical activities?

What skills and abilities are needed to be successful in that environment?

It can be helpful to look at the [curriculum](#) (Texas Essential Knowledge & Skills) to determine what typical children will learn in a specific grade placement.

As you consider the skills and abilities typical children demonstrate in that environment, think about your own child. It's easy to think "My child could never do those things!" Instead, look for ways to [adapt](#) the environment, the [supports and services](#) your child receives, or other ways your child could be successful there in his/her own way. Think creatively!

What skills are required in the adult service system? Opportunities are very limited for individuals who do not have the self-help or communication skills or appropriate behavior to attend some day programs.

What will it take for your child to be successful in that environment?

What modifications will help? Is assistive technology necessary? Are the buildings accessible for your child? What supports and services do you anticipate needing? What can your child work on right now to better prepare him/her?

Who at the "powers that be" – The Decision-Makers?

Who will participate in the decision-making for your child? Who will provide direct services to your child there? Identify those people by name and job title. Make an appointment and begin getting to know these people before your child gets there. Help them begin getting to know your child and where he/she is headed; they will be much more invested in helping to make those plans happen once you get there.

Make a plan. Steven Covey says to "begin with the end in mind." A successful transition depends on careful planning and the help of many. Make sure that everyone involved in your child's current

placement is included in the planning and that you all have the same “end in mind.” Remember the purpose of the IEP.

As your child approaches adulthood, there are many new things to consider, decisions to be made, and tools available to help you make them. We offer an overview of these topics, and point you to where you can learn more:

- [Self-Determination](#): Having Choice in one’s life
- [Self-Advocacy](#): Speaking up For Oneself
- [Person-Centered Planning](#): Taking An Intentional Approach to Planning for the Future
- [Guardianship and Alternatives to Guardianship](#) – Protecting Your Young Adult’s Rights and Legal Responsibilities
- [A Parent Perspective on Transition](#)
- Transition Planning – Including Post-Secondary goals, Courses of Study and Coordination of services
- Graduation

Know that the environments and supports you create for your child in elementary, junior high and high school will determine the kinds of environments and supports that child will need in the adult world. The sooner you can build self-advocacy, independence, social skills, and relationships with others, the more likely an adult life in the community will become.

It’s never too early; it’s never too late! Too often we see families trying to make serious life-changing decisions in the midst of a crisis.

Whether your child has many years before graduation, or less than 6 months, take a few minutes to educate yourself on what’s ahead and begin thinking about the future *today*.

Additional Resources

[Transition to Preschool from ECI](#)

Transition to Kindergarten

Transition to Middle School

Transition to High School

Transition to Adulthood